

Request for Initial Proposals (RFIP) for Continued Operation of the Local Government Compliance Assistance Center

I. Summary

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has funded the development and operation of ten Compliance Assistance Centers (Centers) to help small and medium size businesses and local governments better understand and comply with environmental regulations. EPA seeks to partner with an eligible recipient meeting certain legal and programmatic criteria to continue operation and maintenance of the compliance assistance center for local governments, currently operating as the Local Government Environmental Assistance Network (LGEAN). This request for an initial proposal (RFIP) solicits applications from non-profit organizations and from universities. To be considered, initial proposals meeting the criteria described below must be delivered to EPA by 5:00 P.M., Friday, March 28, 2003. In the second step, or Request for Final Proposal (RFP), EPA will invite all applicants whose initial proposals met the threshold criteria to submit a more detailed proposal for the operation and maintenance of the local government compliance assistance center. The Agency will award a cooperative agreement to the applicant whose detailed proposal is ranked highest by EPA management.

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number and title for this project is # 66.305, Compliance Assistance Support for Services to the Regulated Community and other Assistance Providers. (See the web-site at www.cfda.gov) An estimate of the Federal funds available for this award is \$600,000 over a 5-year period. EPA will initially fund on a one year basis and will consider funding the balance of the yearly budget requests contingent upon satisfactory progress as certified by the EPA Project Officer, the availability of funds, and EPA priorities.

II. Background

The purpose of the RFIP is to solicit applications from non-profit organizations and universities to operate and maintain the national compliance assistance center for local governments. The Local Government Environmental Assistance Network (LGEAN) was funded by a cooperative agreement that expired in September 2002. Under the Grants Competition Policy that went into effect October 1, 2002, EPA now competes any assistance agreement that will provide the recipient more than \$75,000 in a year.

The local government compliance assistance center is intended as a “first-stop shop” that provides environmental management, planning, funding, and regulatory information useful to local government elected and appointed officials, managers and staff. The center’s environmental compliance information, tools, and services must be easy to read, easy to use, and tailored specifically to the environmental aspects of local government operations (i.e., wastewater treatment, solid waste disposal, building maintenance, drinking water provision, vehicle fleet operations, etc.).

The local government compliance assistance center must be kept up to date on environmental issues associated with local government activities. To achieve this goal, the recipient must:

- Create Internet linkages and partnerships among the various local government groups/associations, EPA and other federal regulatory agencies, other relevant organizations, and the compliance assistance provider communities.
- Develop content (including, regulatory and pollution prevention information) that will address the needs of local governments.
- Use stakeholder communication channels to promote/disseminate this information on a timely basis to the various local government groups/associations.

EPA helped establish LGEAN and the nine other compliance assistance centers by sponsoring partnerships with industry, academics, stakeholder organizations, environmental groups, and other Agencies. The centers provide comprehensive, easy to understand, sector-specific compliance information, tools, and services. In 1997, after extensive discussions with local government stakeholders identified the need for a local government compliance assistance center, EPA awarded a cooperative agreement to the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and six partner organizations: the Air and Waste Management Association, the American Waterworks Association, the Environmental Council of the States, the National Association of Counties, the Solid Waste Association of America, and the Water Environment Federation. This consortium, later expanded to include the International Municipal Lawyers Association and the Public Entity Risk Institute, currently operates the Local Government Environmental Assistance Network (LGEAN) and its website at www.lgean.org. ICMA worked with the LGEAN partners, EPA, and various local government stakeholders to identify, develop, and post environmental compliance content that meets the needs of local governments. The web-site, and its associated toll-free telephone information service (1-877-865-4326), make it easier for local governments to learn about, understand, and comply with the environmental requirements that apply to their operations.

As stated above, the assistance agreement with ICMA and its LGEAN partners expired in September 2002. In accordance with EPA policy encouraging competition for assistance agreements, the Agency now seeks proposals from qualified applicants who can partner with EPA, various local government support organizations, and other interested parties and who are capable of both supporting the continued operation and maintenance of the local government environmental compliance center and providing outreach efforts to local government entities.

III. Purpose of the Local Government Environmental Assistance Network

LGEAN provides information, tools, and services that facilitate environmental compliance, pollution prevention, environmental management systems, regulation development, homeland security, and building financial capacity. LGEAN also provides expert answers to

user's environmental questions, a fax-back service, a consultants directory, webcast seminars and links to other services and sources environmental information. Working with its partners and EPA, LGEAN acquires the most up-to-date environmental information and makes that information available to subscribers in regular e-mail updates. Environmental compliance information is made available in its original form and in plain-language versions. LGEAN invites comments and feedback from users to continually improve the content and usability of the web-site. Local officials can interact with their peers and others online at LGEAN, learn of the latest environmental developments, and access a calendar of events.

In fiscal year 2003, LGEAN logged more than 111,000 user sessions, provided expert responses to almost 900 inquiries, and the number of subscribers to its e-mail update service grew to exceed 3,200.

IV. Technical Components of the Current Local Government Center

LGEAN currently uses Cold Fusion. It has a minimum amount of broad band demand to promote quick loading. It has been tested for use on IE as well as Netscape. In the past there have been approximately 10,000 user sessions per month on www.lgean.org.

This information is provided for informational purposes only. Applicants can propose alternative approaches to carrying out the objectives of the center.

V. Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be a nonprofit organization as that term is defined in Section 4(6) of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999, Public Law 96-107, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note. Colleges, universities, and community colleges are eligible to apply. However, nonprofit organizations as described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. In addition, for profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs is not applicable to this request for an initial proposal.

VI. Required Application and Threshold Criteria Information

There is no standard governmental form for interested parties to use when submitting their initial proposal. The prospective grantee must include the following general information.

- Name of Organization
- Description of Organization (associated members, if any, purpose/function of the organization)
- Address, City, State and Zip
- Telephone and Facsimile Number

- Responsible Official with email address

Eligible and interested parties are invited to provide EPA with verifiable documentation indicating how their organization meets **all** of the following threshold criteria:

- Applicant can demonstrate that it has a financial management and time management system in place that meets the requirements in the applicable OMB Circular (A-21 for Universities and A-122 for non profit organizations).
- Applicant can demonstrate that it has an indirect cost rate that has been approved by a federal agency or has a cost allocation system that meets the requirements in the applicable OMB Circular.
- Applicant can demonstrate a previous working relationship(s) with experts and national organizations devoted to the proper operation, management, and funding of public utilities at the local government level.
- Applicant can demonstrate an understanding of the environmental needs of the local government sector through past activities.
- Applicant has the hardware and web-based expertise to manage the local government compliance assistance center.
- Applicant can demonstrate previous experience in developing and maintaining web-based services.

An initial proposal responding to these six criteria should be no greater than ten (10) pages in length, and must be delivered to EPA by 5:00 P.M., Friday, March 28, 2003. Applicants must clearly mark any data that the applicant considers being Confidential Business Information (CBI). If necessary, EPA will make final confidential business information determinations under 40 CFR Part 2, Subpart B.

VII. Pre-application Assistance

Eligible and interested applicants may contact Joseph Hall (202/564-2271) with questions regarding eligibility and threshold criteria. The Agency will post answers to significant or frequently asked questions on <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/assistance/centers/index.html>. Applicants are encouraged to review these questions and answers prior to submitting their initial proposals.

VIII. Evaluation Process

An EPA evaluation panel will review the initial proposals on a “pass/fail” basis and make recommendations to senior management in the Office of Compliance. Applicants must meet the eligibility of **all** six threshold criteria to be invited to submit a more detailed final proposal. The EPA will notify both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

All successful applicants that met the threshold criteria will be requested to submit a more detailed final proposal for the maintenance and operation of the local government

compliance assistance center. The Agency will award a cooperative agreement to the applicant whose final proposal best meets the criteria as set out in the Request for Final Proposal. The Request for Final Proposal package can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/assistance/centers/index.html>

IX. Initial Proposal Submission

Interested applicants can submit their application package by mail, email, or facsimile no later than 5:00 P.M., Friday, March 28, 2003 to:

Mr. Joseph Hall (2224A)
US Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Compliance
Room 7111D
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460
facsimile: (202) 564-2271
email: hall.joseph@epa.gov

Information submitted to address the six threshold criteria should not exceed ten (10) total pages. Applicants meeting all criteria will be invited to submit a proposal for management and operation of the local government compliance assistance center. The EPA expects to notify all applicants of their eligibility to continue onto the final proposal by April 4, 2003. Any disputes that arise during the selection process will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR 330.63 and Part 31, subpart F. (See web-site at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/index.html>.)

EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals or applications and make no award. EPA is currently under continuing resolution. This project will not be funded until EPA's operating budget for 2003 receives final approval.